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Mamluk Soundscape. A Chapter in Sensory History

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- Y. Frenkel, "In Search of Consensus: Conflict and Cohesion among the Political Elite of the Late Mamlūk Sultanate", *The Medieval History Journal* 19/2 (2016): 253–284.
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- Y. Frenkel, "Some Notes Concerning the Trade and Education of Slave-Soldiers during the Mamluk Era", in Christoph Cluse and Reuven Amitai (eds.), *Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean 11th-15th Centuries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), pp. 187-212.
- Y. Frenkel, "Islam as a Peacemaking Religion: Self-Image, Medieval Theory, and Practice", in Yvonne Friedman (ed.), *Religion and Peace Historical Aspects* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 84-97.

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Mamluk Soundscape. A Chapter in Sensory History

Abstract

Sounds and pageantry play significant political and social roles. Giving meaning to sounds is a social production. They create an acoustic community. This was not strange to pre-modern authors. By studying Mamluk soundscape we gain new insights into the elites' and commoners' practices and discourse. Data by contemporaneous writers cast light on the role of music, on events that took place in the public sphere, and on reactions that these sounds generated. These sources tell that sounds were instrumental in boosting a sultans' image and prestige. Recent studies highlight the diverse ethnic composition of the Mamluk military aristocracy. Texts that were produced by members of this ruling class illuminate public performances in Arabic and in Turkish, hence enrich our knowledge of the court culture and languages. From the accounts of sounds we can also deduce on scholarly ties that connected pre-Islamic Hellenistic civilization with the learned discussion that prevailed among Mamluk scholars. Sounds played a key role in religious rituals and ceremonies. Accounts of Sufi assemblies and visitors' guides provide thick descriptions of such communal events. Similar data can be extracted from pious endowments charters. Looking at the soundscape from an opposite angle we come across deeds that prevented non-Muslims from raising their voices in public spheres. Mamluk period Pact of Umar illuminates this socio-religious reality and sultan's efforts to control sounds in urban environments.

Introduction: Sound Studies

That sounds and pageantry play significant political and social roles in public arenas is but common wisdom.[1] Students of the Qurʾān are familiar with the acoustic mode of several sections of the Holy Book, particularly the last *sūras*. Hearing is a shared communal sense and sounds have a collective capacity, they influence us. Intentionally and non-deliberately, voices call attention. Their melodies and rhythm generate an emotive mode.[2] We can soundly maintain that sounds create an acoustic community.[3] As such, sounds have a social role. They echo events, either chaotic (*fitna*)[4] or harmonic. A glorious event was described "nothing similar to it was heard".[5] This is the contradiction between *yawm mashhūd* or *ḥāfil* (well-attended festival but also funeral)[6] and *yawm muhhawīl* or *mahūl* (dreadful day).[7] Moreover, sounds reflect the changing times. An ambassador from Istanbul brought to Damascus a playing clock that staged a musical show each hour.[8]

The historical interpretation of voices is based upon the assumption that giving meaning to sounds is a social production.[9] Awareness of this led to the expansion of a new historical field. Some years ago, Roman Jacobson wrote on the sound of reading, on rhythm that catches the ear and the attention. For him: "The task is to investigate speech sounds in relation to the meanings with which they are invested, i.e. sounds viewed as signifiers".[10] This developing field of historical studies investigates the production of sounds in the public sphere and their ingestion. It examines the inspiration of sonic environments upon people's emotions. The emergence of this field illuminates the growing interest of professional and amateur historians in sensory history, in the past of sounds and lights.[11] Hence, the history of soundscapes joins the study of historical landscapes.[12]

The Aim of this Chapter

The historiographical turn in the 1970s affected the study of the Mamluk Sultanate. In addition to investigating political and army institutions, scholars developed research interests in religious and cultural history.The study of Mamluk political history and culture (1250-1517) is based primarily on chronicles and biographical dictionaries. Composers of these sources either belonged to the religious establishment or worked for the sultanate's administration. Even a quick glance in Mamluk chronicles will reveal that sounds preceded events or concluded them. To secure this observation I will refer in the following pages to voices that occurred in the urban public sphere. It is sufficient to mention here the names of

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[1] Arkette, "Sounds Like City", 160.
[2] Sells, "Sound and Meaning", 403-430.
[3] Schafer, *The Soundscape*, 215.
[4] Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Durar al-kāmina*, 3:262 (no. 681 Kitbughā).
[5] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 3:154, 283 (gathering at the Ibn Tūlūn Mosque); *One Thousand Nights*, 3:539 (night 738 the wedding of Ardashīr and Ḥayāt al-Nufūs).
[6] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 3:267 (894/August 1489 the opening of the Nile's dam), 271 (895/1490 the performance of singers in a royal circumcision), 276; Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, 3:429 (Rabīʿa Khatūn attended the inauguration of a school sitting behind the curtain); Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 65 (the funeral of al-Jawād al-Isfahānī).
[7] Ibn Taghrī Birdī (813-874/1411-1470), *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, 15:96 (AH 843); Ibn Ṣaṣrā, *al-Durra al-muḍīʿa*, 35.
[8] Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:483 (777/1376).
[9] Kelman, "Rethinking the Soundscape", 215.
[10] Jakobson, *Six Lectures*.
[11] Febvre, "La sensibilité et l'histoire"; Corbin, "Charting the Cultural History of the Senses"; Bull/Gilroy/Howes/Kahn, "Introducing Sensory Studies"; Smith, "Producing Sense".
[12] Ergin, "The Soundscape".

al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī or Ibn Khaldūn. Theirs and others' works are tagged as *siyāsa* oriented historiography,[13] namely source material that largely aims at fortifying the sultanate's ruling elite. Hence their writings devote considerable space to reports of the sultans' courts and on careers among the authors' social circles. They inform us also of the soundscape of the Sultanate. The following story clearly illuminates a common feature of Mamluk historical textsand supports our research questions and methodology,[14] which are at the roots of the present contribution:

> On *Rabīʿ* the first (20 April-19 May) on the first of Pashons (9 May-7 June in the Coptic calendar; it is Mary the Mother of God's birthday) the sultan changed his dress. He took off the winter woollen costume and dressed in the summer white uniform. Next, he held the Prophet's *mawlid* festival[15] and played polo.[16]

The reports on the conversion of the leader of Damascus' Jewish congregation provides a second example to the style and contents of the *siyāsa*-oriented historiography. The event is reported by a contemporaneous author:

> In this year on Tuesday 4 Dhū l-Ḥijja (31 July 1302) ʿAbd al-Sayyid ibn al-Muhadhdhab, then the chief judge of the Jews of Damascus who inherited this post from his father and grandfather, came over to the *dār al-ʿadl* (palace of justice or court of grievances). Together with him were his sons. They all converted to Islam. The viceroy of Damascus granted them robes of honour (*khilʿa*) and ordered that horses be prepared so they could ride in a parade in the city of Damascus and for drums (*dabādib*) to be beaten and horns (*abwāq/būqāt*) be played at the tail of the procession. All this was for the purpose of publicizing their conversion to Islam.[17]

The governor of Cairo arrested the singer Ḥadīja al-Riḥābīya. She was a famously beautiful Arab artist who mesmerized dignitaries and influential men. One of her admirers even composed several short verses regarding her:

> The beauty of Ḥadīja al-Riḥābīya hide the parhelia / the loveliness of her singing decorates her words // She resembles the moon at the night it is full / may her vision never ever fade from my eyes and heart.

In order to limit her influence, the governor ordered this prestigious lady to stop performing. The expulsion from the stage broke her heart and she died at a very young age.[18]
Sounds reflected the nature of the ruling system. In urban centres of the Sultanate they informed the subjects of the political goals of their rulers. Often, they accompanied royal processions of Mamluk sultans, the voices of armies riding to the battle fields, the entry of

[13] Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 183-184 ("a new historiography came into being under the umbrella of *siyasa,* most typically represented in what may be called the imperial bureaucratic chronicle. (…) The Mamluk chronicles, in my opinion the climax of this *siyasa-oriented* historiography, broadened to include the alpha and the omega, the *bidaya* and the *nihaya* of history").
[14] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 3:193 (887/1482).
[15] On vocal aspects of this yearly celebrations see Katz, *The Birth*, 63-87; Homerin, "Sufism in Mamluk Studies", 196.
[16] On the hippodromes of Cairo and the game see Shehada, *Mamluks and Animals*, 203-206.
[17] Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl* (ed. and trans. Guo), 1:206-27; (ed. Abbas): 656; Ibn Kathīr supplements additional information: "The procession came to a halt at their house. There they celebrated at night. Jurists and judges participated with them in the completing the recitation of the Qurʾān". Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wal-nihāya*, 18:10.
[18] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 3:185-186 (886/1481).

victorious battalions, and the echoes of prisoners on their way to jail[19] or to the site of execution are only several categories of noisy political activities. Their effects on the audiences certainly are more affective in illiterate societies. Indeed, the Mamluk society was not an uneducated one, but no doubt the urban mobs were not the target of written texts. Sounds were the tools to affect them.[20]

The research of soundscape contributes to the reconstruction of diverse fields of study of Mamluk urban society and its military aristocracy. The data presented so far and additional episodes that will be mentioned below highlight the potential contribution of soundscape history to the study of Mamluk politics and urban society.[21] It casts light on Cairo's Citadel, royal images, social perceptions, rituals and communication. Hence, by concentrating on these accounts this paper aims at fixing the role of sounds' reports as the central research question and thus contributing to the developing field of sensory history. The distinguishing feature of this historical method is its explicit treatment of the senses. This branch of historical studies is based upon the presumption that the study of the senses is pertinent to the study of past societies, and that the study of soundscape is undoubtedly a salient component of this research field. But this venture is not an isolated investigation of an esoteric field. It constitutes a section of social history and is a potential contribution to popular culture. We cannot isolate our examination of the political history of the Mamluk Sultanate from the study of the cultural production within its realm. We can argue soundly that in our efforts to reconstruct the past a holistic approach is a methodological obligation. In the present endeavour my attention will be focused mainly on court culture. Although our reconstruction of Mamluk sounds is based primarily on written accounts, nevertheless material sources preserve data on how these tools were employed to produce sounds. Indeed, we cannot hear past noises, though imagining how voices once sounded is an option. We cannot turn up the volume of history and catch the sounds of the past. Yet we can identify the traces of sounds in written sources, and from them we can collect data, which if properly analysed will contribute to our reconstruction of past societies. Consequently, by giving us another dimension of past societies the study of soundscape provides us with an additional tool to study these societies' histories.

Mamluk Authors on Sounds

Let us move now from these general reflections regarding sounds in Islamic public spheres to a condensed report on ear-witness accounts from the Mamluk realm. Yet before presenting the source material used in our investigation of Mamluk sounds, I would like to call your attention to the well documented fact that the political and social importance of voices, their impacts and the control of them were not strange to Muslim scholars who compiled the Middle Islamic period texts that are at our disposal. These scholars highlighted the social and political importance of public performances,[22] including the sounds that were produced in the lands under the Mamluk sultans' control, long before modern politicians employed mass assemblies, processions, and sound and light plays. From their writing we can deduce easily that sounds affected the population of the Mamluk Sultanate, no doubt about it. To support this statement, it is sufficient to present here several well-known Mamluk period writers' statements on sounds and on measures to monitor noises. The pseudo-Aristotle's advice to

[19] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 3:137 (Cairo, 882/1477: "He was put on a donkey and disgraced by hanging a bell on his neck").
[20] Smith, *Sensing the Pasts*, 42.
[21] Presumably the first to study this field was Schafer, *The Soundscape*.
[22] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 3: 106-07 (Muḥarram 880/May 1475 the returning Ḥajj pilgrims were received by singers).

Alexander the Great was well received by Mamluk period Muslim scholars,[23] as we can work out from colophons of several copies that were reproduced in the lands of the Sultanate. In this work the great popular Greek philosopher is quoted as advising the legendary king:

> And let there be plenty of frightening and terrific sound-producing instruments, even if you do not need them. For verily instruments that produce frightening sounds and alarming voices will inspire thy men with courage and strengthen their spirits. From the opposite end those instruments will terrify thy enemy. Fear will disperse them.[24]

This short citation can serve us as a springboard to further supporting evidence.[25] The names of several "famous" Mamluk compositors pop up instantly. I will transmit three fifteenth-century accounts by authors who painted a comprehensive picture of Mamluk institutions. These translations are arranged chronologically. It is no surprise to learn that in his al-Muqaddima Ibn Khaldūn holds forth on music and on sound. In a chapter entitled *The Characteristic Emblems of Royal and Government Authority*, he deals with the ceremonial instrument (*āla*):[26]

> One of the emblems of royal authority is the set of instruments (*āla*), that is, the display of banners and flags and the beating of drums (*ṭubūl*) and the blowing of trumpets (*abwāq*) and horns (*qurūn*). In the Book on Politics (*kitāb al-siyāsa*) ascribed to Aristotle, Aristotle mentioned that its real significance is to frighten the enemy in war. Frightful sounds do have the psychological effect of causing terror. Indeed, as everyone knows from his own [experience], this is an emotional element that plays a role on battlefields.[27] The explanation given by Aristotle – if it was he who gave it – is correct in some respects. But the truth is that listening to music and sounds no doubt causes pleasure and emotion in the soul. The spiritual temper of man is thereby affected by a kind of drunkenness, which causes him to make light of difficulties and to be willing to die in the very condition in which he finds himself. This (state of affairs) exists even in dumb animals.[28]

The second piece of sound analysis that Ibn Khaldūn wrote is found in a section that concentrates on popular music and dancing. Here, the great historian maintains that:

> When (the Arabs) sang, they often effected a simple harmony between the modes, as was mentioned by Ibn Rashīq at the end of the *Kitāb al-ʿUmda*, and by others. This was called *sinād*. Most (Arab music) was in the light rhythm (*khafīf*) that is used for dancing and marching, accompanied by drums (*daff*) and flutes (*mizmār*). It causes emotion and makes the serious-minded feel light hearted. The Arabs called that *hazaj*. All these simple types of melodious music are primary ones. It is not implausible to assume that they can be grasped by nature without any instruction, as is the case with all simple crafts.[29]

In his encyclopaedic description of the sultanate's political institutions and rituals, al-Qalqashandī describes the music bands of the Mamluk army in similar words:

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[23] The complex history of this text is beyond the limits of the present contribution. Yet from the history of the manuscripts it is clear that in Ibn Khaldun's days "*sirr al-asrār*" was popular among Arabic readers. Gaster, "The Hebrew Version"; Manzalaoui, "The Pseudo-Aristotelian 'Kitāb Sirr al-asrār'"; Daiber, *Islamic Though*, 48.

[24] Pseudo-Aristotle, in Badawī, *al-Uṣūl al-Yūnāniyya*, 150 (ll. 2-3); Fulton, *Secretum secretorum*, 248.

[25] Quatremère, *Makrizi*, 1: 173-174 (note 54).

[26] Cf. Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī's account of India. Quatremère, "Notices", 188-189.

[27] Cf. al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 1:935 (702/1303).

[28] Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 2:42-43; ed. al-Shaddādī, 2:36-37; Rosenthal (trans.), *The Muqaddimah*, 2:48.

[29] Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 2:359; ed. al-Shaddādī, 2:329; Rosenthal (trans.), *The Muqaddimah*, 2:403.

> The *ṭabl-khāna* is an assemblage of many drums together with trumpets and flutes. This band produce a mixture of changing voices according to the occasion. Each evening, after the evening prayer, it plays in the Citadel. It escorts the army companies on marches and during fighting. It is a common instrument employed by kings generally. It is narrated that Alexander [the Great] had in his service forty *ṭabl-khāna* bands. Aristoteles, who wrote for Alexander the *Book of Government*, mentions in this book that the secret behind employing these bands is that during wars they terrorizes the enemy. Other knowledgeable persons argue that these bands' sounds excite the soul and strengthen the mind in an equivalent manner to which cameldrivers' voices affect the camels.

This is followed by a closer look at the musical bands:

> Great cymbals (*kūsāt*) are another musical instrument.[30] They are basket shaped instruments made from cooper that are designed like a small shield (*ṣunūj*). The player knocks with one brass castanet on the other in an orchestrated tempo. In the *ṭabl-khāna* it goes with drums' playing and blowing of pipes. This is done twice each night in the Citadel. They go around it once after the night prayer and a second time before the call to the morning prayer. It is named the circling of the Citadel. On the occasions that the sultan is travelling this band circles his tent.[31]

Khalīl Ibn Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī tells his readers that the band of the sultan comprised forty loads (*ḥaml* pl. *aḥmāl*) of cymbals (*kūsāt*), four double headed kettledrums *(duhūl),* four reed pipes *(zumūr),* and twenty trumpets *(anfira).* Among the instruments used in the *ṭabl-khāna* of an *amīr*, says al-Ẓāhirī, were two *duhūl*, two *zamr*, and four *nafīr*, but not the great *kūsāt.* An *atābak* (field marshal) was allowed twice this number, whilst an *amīr muqaddam* (commander of one thousand) was only permitted a horn (*būk*).[32] According to his summary of the music production in the elites' courts:

> the *amīr*s of a thousand numbered in the past 24 *amīr*. Each one of them commanded one hundred *mamlūk*s and other professional officers, and one thousand reserve soldiers (*jundī*). They had before their houses eight 'loads' (*aḥmāl*) of *ṭabl-khāna* [bands], and two timbales (*ṭabl dahl*), two flutes (*zamr*), and four trumpets (*anfira*), as well as new timbale and flutes. The orchestra playing at the gate of the army's commander in chief (*atābak [al-ʿasākir*]) was twice as large. In the past (i.e. during the reign of the first sultans), the number of the *ṭabl-khāna* emirs was forty commanders. Each one of them commanded forty *mamlūks*. Three bands of *ṭabl-khāna* players and two trumpets (*naf̄ir*), but today (i.e. in the days of al-Ẓāhirī), there are only two drums (*ṭabl*) and two flutes (*zamr*).[33]

The symbolic power of the *ṭabl-khāna* reflects the military character of the Mamluk regime. The sounds produced by these musical bands in peace and war, in the towns and during expeditions, clearly conveyed to the listeners the true nature of the sultanate, certainly more sharply than any political theory that some jurist wrote for the governing military aristocracy.[34]

Ibn Taghrī Birdī says that under Qalāwūn (d. 678/1290) a *wazīr* possessed a *ṭabl-khāna,*[35] and we read of a similar privilege in 821/1418, although we are told that the custom

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[30] Ibn Khaldūn states that *kūsāt* were allowed to each *amīr* who commanded an army battalion. *Al-Muqaddima*, 2:46; Rosenthal (trans.), *The Muqaddimah*, 2:52.
[31] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā,* 4:8-9.
[32] Ibn Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat kashf*, 125.
[33] Ibn Shahin al-Ẓāhirī, *Zubdat kashf*, 113.
[34] Ayalon, "Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army – I", 469-470; Farmer, "Ṭabl-Khāna".
[35] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, 8:141.

was not usual. According to him, it was only the officers (*umarāʾ*) who commanded a battalion of one thousand soldiers who were granted this honour. By the 9th/15th century, however, an *amīr* of forty cavaliers was allowed to possess a *ṭabl-khāna*, but for a time he was only allowed to sound it when on duty. When the Ottomans conquered Egypt in 923/1517, the bands of the battalions were suppressed.[36]

We mentioned above the role of drums and trumpets in the battlefield, an ancient method of transmitting vocal signals during fighting that was familiar to the Mamluk armies.[37] Muḥammad al-Aqsarāʾī (d. 749/1348), a Damascene author about whom little is known, remarks in his book on horsemanship that military horses trained for battle should be used to the beat of drums (*ṭubūl*) and cymbals (*kūsāt).*[38] In his comprehensive study of the Mamluk army, David Ayalon summarizes this military institution. As the point of departure of his study, Ayalon uses narrative accounts in the chronicles of music-bands (*ṭabl-khāna*),[39] yet he adds also the accounts of Mamluk administration guides. Based on these sources, he explains that the *amīr* of *ṭabl-khāna* was so called because holders of this and higher ranks were entitled to have a band playing (*ṭabl-khāna*) in front of their houses. According to the sources, he says, the *ṭabl-khāna* consisted of a group of musical instruments, including many drums and some trumpets (*abwāq*), and flutes (*zumūr*) of various timbres and playing in a specific style. Every evening, following the evening prayer, the instruments would be played. The *ṭabl-khāna* accompanied the army battalions (*ṭulb* pl. *aṭlāb*) of the sultan or the *amīr*s in wars and expeditions with the aim of heartening the troops and striking terror into the hearts of the enemy.[40] Similar interpretations of royal processions are put forward by several scholars. Headed by the carrier of the standard (*ʿalam-dār*), who carried the great royal banner (*jālish*) of gold-embroidered yellow silk adorned with a tuft of horsehair, the procession advanced. Behind the standard carriers walked the armour bearers headed by the arsenal commander (*silāḥ-dār*). The *amīr*s, on horseback or on foot, came next with their retinue of *mamlūk*s, in similar order and with hardly less pomp, and the tail was brought up by the royal band, *al-ṭabl-khāna al-sharīfa*, an ensemble more noisy than melodious, composed of four big drums, forty brass cymbals, four double-reed clarinets, and twenty small kettledrums.[41]

Political Sounds

Sounds were instrumental in boosting a sultans' image and prestige. Sounds were – and are – a tool to inform, particularly in zones where direct eye contact is limited. Buildings obstruct visibility and voices surpass this obstacle. The playing of the drums informed listeners of a new development. The rhythm broadcasted the notation, perhaps the announcement that a new sultan had ascended the throne in the citadel on the hill overlooking Cairo, or an alarm caused by a crisis. Chronicles tell that bands of drummers (*ṭabl-khāna*) publicly announced momentous events. The rhythm of drums on these occasions differed from the music played by tambourines or the beating of the drums during fighting. The Mamluk rulers staged cavalcades, pageants (*mawkib* pl. *mawākib*), communal ceremonies,[42] processions of the

[36] Quatremère (trad.), *al-Maqrizi*, I/1, 173-4 (note).
[37] Aelian in Dillon (trans.), *The Tactics of Aelian*, 128; this Greek author (al-Yānūs) was not strange to Arab audiences. Wüstenfeld, *Das Heerwesen der Muhammedaner*.
[38] Jensen, "The Mamluk Lancer", 13 (Arabic), 14 (English).
[39] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 1: 694-695; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 3: 4 (872/1468), 34 (873/1469); Ibn Zunbul, *Ākhirat al-mamālīk*, 78.
[40] Ayalon, "Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army", 469-470.
[41] Stowasser, "Manners and Customs at the Mamluk Court", 19.
[42] Cf. the description from Damascus by a contemporary author. Al-Dhahabī, *al-ʿIbar*, 4:3 (701/1301).

palanquin (*maḥmal*),[43] displays of penalties (*tasmīr*),[44] and public festivities. On cheerful occasions such as investitures of sultans, proclamations of royal births, or recovery of the sultan's health, cities were decorated. This was done also in cases that a contester succeeded in winning a political challenge.[45] News of military triumphs was broadcasted across the cities by the playing of drums[46] and victories saw public celebrations. On these occasions, cavalry and infantry marched across the city, drums played loudly, jugglers performed, and emblems of state were put on display.[47]

In grave cases, times of tension, or crisis the kettledrums and cymbals played war marches (*duqqat al-kūsāt ḥarbiyy*^{an}).[48] Writing about a political crisis during the second term in office of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (1299-1309), the historian al-Maqrīzī says: "and the great cymbals (*kūsāt*) of the sultan in the Citadel of Cairo were beaten and played the sound of war (*duqq*^{an} *ḥarbiyy*^{an}), with the intention of calling those units of the army that kept their loyalty to the sultan to gather into the citadel".[49] Reports of victories are often appended with the plain and simple line:"and the drums roared "*duqqat al-bashāʾir*",[50] "*durribat lahū al-bashāʾir*"[51] or "*duqqat lahū al-bashāʾir wa-kāna yawm*^{an} *mashūd*^{an},,[52] or "*wa-duqqat al-kūsāt*".[53] So were also transmitted the news of the ascendancy of a new sultan. With sounds, camel-lights and decorations, as can be deduced from the following account of a circumcision that took place in Damascus:[54]

> [And] Ibn Ḥijjī said: in a word (*wa-ʿalā al-jumla*), such a festive day never was seen in Damascus before. The viceroy ordered to be brought eight horses coated with horse-blankets (*kanābīsh*) made of silk and embroidered with gold and silver (*zarkash*), and on them golden saddles. The presenting senior commanders mounted the horses. Then the boy was summoned to the grand tent. The commanders rode out, and the viceroy and his son followed them. The musicians paraded behind them till they arrived at the Palace of Felicity (*dār al-saʿāda*).[55]

The following section brings together several reports, presented in chronological order that cast light on the task of voices in spreading news and on loud receptions of them. To support the paradigm I advocate, I choose to present several public performances in Mamluk Cairo and in other provinces of the Sultanate. The aim is to demonstrate the contribution of soundscape studies to the investigation of Mamluk political discourse. By concentrating upon accounts of political events that took place in the major cities of the Sultanate, I am aiming at elucidating the thesis that sounds inform us of the social environment and of the political nature of past regimes and historical societies. To welcome the victorious Mamluk battalions returning to Cairo after victory over the Mongols in ʿAyn Jālūt, the city was decorated (*zuyyinat*).[56] Similar descriptions of beautification can be detected in reports on royal

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[43] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār*, 1:93-94; Shoshan, *Popular Culture*, 70-72; Behrens-Abouseif, "The *Mahmal* Legend", 94.
[44] Ibn al-Qaysarānī, *Kitāb al-Durr al-maṣūn*, 93.
[45] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 2:214 (AH 842/).
[46] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 2:100 (828/1425).
[47] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 4:521 (*nafṭ* petroleum in 823/1420).
[48] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, 8:170.
[49] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 2:*77* (707/1307).
[50] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, 10:302 (755/October 1354); al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 4:893 (836/1433); Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 2:316 (AH 857), 342 (AH 861).
[51] Al-ʿAynī, *al-ʿIqd al-Jumān*, 302 (792/February 1390 the drums played three days).
[52] Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī, *Duwal al-islām*, 49, 56, 89, 90.
[53] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 2: 73; al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-nāẓir*, 141; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:129.
[54] Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Taʾrīkh*, 4: 28-29; Ibn Ḥijjī, *Taʾrīkh Ibn Ḥijjī*, 370; cf. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 3:115 (Ibn Riḥāb al-Mughnī in Damietta 880/April). On him see Ḥassan, "Ṭāʿift al-maġānī", 380-81.
[55] I.e. the governors' quarters. On this palace see Brinner, "Dār al-Saʿāda"; Rabbat, "The Ideological Significance".
[56] Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī, *Duwal al-islām*, 33, 55.

processions.[57] This passive verb occurs hundreds of times in the chronicles that tell of the *entrée royale*.[58] Moreover, this demonstration of honour was not limited to the military aristocracy but was occasionally also shown towards the religious establishment. When the *qāḍī* Karīm al-Dīn arrived in Cairo (717/1317) the city was decorated and thousands of candles and torches ignited. At night a reception was orchestrated.[59]

As Qalāwūn was concluding his preparation to seize the throne in Cairo (in 1279), several of his Mamluks joined him. In two days and seven hours they crossed the distance separating Cairo from Damascus. "Such a speed never was recorded in the past", says the historian, and adds: "and then the drums were beaten and all the population, city dwellers and countryside residents, were notified about this promising information".[60] Describing the siege of Acre (690/1291) by al-Ashraf ibn Qalāwūn, the chronicler tells that:

> at dawn the sultan and his armies advanced towards the city, the kettledrums played loudly, they produced frightening sound and high unpleasant voices.[61]

Similar vocabulary is used in an account of the Mamluk victory over the Mongols at Marj al-Ṣuffār (702/1303):

> Advancing, the sultan's *kūsāt* and the trumpets (*būqāt*) played. Their sounds shook the earth and hearts trembled… The sultan and his cavalry spent the night sitting on their horses while the drums were playing. Their sound attracted the dispersed soldiers, who advanced toward the sultan's drums (*ṭubūl*) and kettledrums.[62]

The account of the resignation of al-Malik al-Nāṣir (in 708/1309) is another case in point. The vacant throne was occupied by Baybars al-Jashnagīr. The military and civil elite assembled and publicly pronounced their recognition of the legitimacy of the new sultan. Following this open support, Baybars rode to the Castle while the military aristocracy walked behind him. "The drums were beaten", says the chronicler, "and the heralds carried the message to other centres of the sultanate".[63] Reporting on the recovery of the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (in 730/1330), the chronicler tells that Cairo was decorated magnificently, in several sites bands of musicians played, the kettle drums were continually beaten and the *amīr*s' *ṭabl-khāna* also played.[64] Following the arrest of al-Nashw,[65] Cairo was decorated (*zuyyinat*). Popular poems (*azjāl*) and satirical verses (*balālīq*) were played in the streets as the civil population celebrated the event.[66] An embassy from Cairo carrying gifts to the ruler of eastern Turkey, including an elephant and a giraffe,[67] stopped in Damascus (741/May 1341). The locals rushed out to examine the animals. While the delegation rested, the elephant was paraded along the city's streets.[68] Describing the departure of Tankiz, the governor of Damascus, to

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[57] Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī, *Duwal al-islām*, 36.
[58] Al-ʿAynī, *al-ʿIqd al-jumān*, 297-298 (792/1390).
[59] Al-Safadī, *Nuzhat al-mālik*, 241.
[60] Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 232 (AH 678); For his career see Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan*, 81-84.
[61] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, 8:6.
[62] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, 8:126.
[63] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wal-nihāya*, 18:80 (ah 708).
[64] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 2:318.
[65] On him see Levanoni, "The al-Nashw Episode".
[66] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 2:482 (740/1339).
[67] Cf. the sending of a giraffe to Tamerlane in 806/1404. The animal was dressed by a yellow silk gown. The jurists of Damascus debated its origin, is it a hybrid of a cow and a camel, and questioned its flesh may be eaten. Ibn Ḥijjī, *Taʾrīkh Ibn Ḥijjīi*, 612, 613.
[68] Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:132.

Anatolia, the chronicler says: "Tankiz was decorated according to the royal etiquette, [his army] adorned in red ribbons and playing on kettle drums".[69]

The detailed account of the nomination and coronation of al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Sayf al-Islām Abū Saʿīd Barqūq (784/November 1382) enriches our acquaintance with the sultanate's royal ceremonies. Following his proclamation, the caliph bestowed upon him the sultan's robe. From the embankment on the Nile, Barqūq rode up the hill to the citadel, where he ascended the throne. While his train paraded it started raining, and the population believed this was a good omen. The army bowed and kissed the ground in front of him. The city was decorated for seven days, and the drums played. Similar act occurred in the cities of Syria.[70] The account of the victorious return of Barqūq to the throne in 792/1390 preserves the joyful scene at the welcoming reception. A mission from Cairo proceeded to meet him at dawn when he arrived at Raydāniyya. Among the dignitaries were the descendants of the Prophet, Sufis carrying banners (*sanājiq*), army battalions dressed for combat and armed with weapons, Jews carrying candelabra and the Torah, Christians holding candles and Bibles. The masses chanted blessings, and the women trilled. As the beating to the drums spread the news that the young prince Faraj had ascended the throne, the streets of Cairo were decorated.[71] After his temporary recovery, sultan Barsbāy bestowed garbs of honour on the surgeons who had treated him. Drums delivered the message.[72]

The news of a victory over the Ottomans pleased the dwellers of the Citadel (891/April 1486). In preparations to welcome the expedition force, Cairo was decorated. While the soldiers entered the Sultanate's capital the sound of the drums rumbled.[73] A month later, as severe illness endangered the life of Qāytbāy, high tension loomed in Cairo. His recovery pleased his followers (891/May 1486). Orders were issued to decorate the city's streets. Drummers played marches spreading the good tidings (*duqqat al-bashāʾir*).[74] As fake news circled in Cairo narrating that the island of Rhodes had surrendered due to political manoeuvres, the sultan considered the playing of military music bands to communicate the false but pleasing information.[75]

The effects created by sounds were familiar to past societies. In his efforts to prop up his image as a good ruler and sound Muslim, the sultan al-Ashraf Qāytbāy initiated a construction policy. At the Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem he ordered the building of a new learning institution (*madrasa*) and water installations. Learning that his construction initiative had been successfully completed, the sultan directed a group of army commanders to travel to the city. They were accompanied by several reciters and preachers[76] and the recently nominated head of the new school (al-Ashrafiyya). Recitation and lecturing were key components of the inauguration ceremony (*walīma*; 890/June 1485).[77] Describing the establishment of the *dashīsha* in al-Madīna by the sultan Qāytbāy,[78] the historian says: "and the voice rose high in approval".[79] The thesis that the study of sounds contributes to the

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[69] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 2:142.
[70] Al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 1:38-40.
[71] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 3:985 (802/1399).
[72] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, 15:99 (841/1437).
[73] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 3:228.
[74] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 3:229.
[75] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 4:272.
[76] From preachers' biographies we can deduce that chanting was not strange to them. From Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Qardāḥ (780-841/1378-1438) we learn that he studied music. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbaʾ al-ghumr*, 4:76-77 (bio. no. 5); *al-Majmaʿ al-muʾassis*, 3:77-78 (bio. no. 442). Ibn Ḥajar was familiar with this preacher and met with him on several occasions. Berkey, "Storytelling, Preaching and Power in Mamluk Cairo", 62.
[77] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 3:218; On this institute of learning and the nearby fountain (*sabīl*) see Tamari, "Al-Ashrafiyya"; Burgoyne, *Mamluk Jerusalem*, 606.
[78] Behrens-Abouseif, "Sultan Qaytbay's Foundation".
[79] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 3:165.

learning of the cultural history of past Islamic societies is supported by accounts of the Rajab and Hajj *maḥmal* (a ceremonial palanquin) processions that accompanied the pilgrim caravans in Cairo and Damascus.[80] Reports on this festival reveal that it was inaugurated in Ayyubid Egypt.[81] Mamluk chronicles report that starting in the reign of al-Ẓāhir Baybars, the *maḥmal* departed Cairo to the holy cities of Arabia. Describing the festive departure of the *maḥmal* caravan from Cairo, late Mamluk writers describe a noisy happening.[82] When the lady Tughāy arrived at Cairo, on her way to the holy cities of Arabia, she was saluted with gorgeous celebrations. As she departed from the Hajj Pond the sultan's flags waved, and the kettle drums played.[83] Another noisy event was the Nile festival (*kasr al-ḥalīj*). Historical accounts describe fire plays and ceremonial sounds.[84] Yet music was not only reserved for rulers' shows or religious occasions. Royal wedding processions (*zaffa*) that escorted the bride to her new dwelling seem also to have been used to demonstrate the host's wealth, strength, and status.[85] During the wedding of the prince Anuk, singing girls played with tambourines.[86] Reports of mass circumcisions inform us that loud music was played.[87] Describing an event in Damascus, the local historian Ibn Ḥijjī exclaims that "such a festive day never was seen in Damascus before. The commanders rode out, and the viceroy and his son followed them. The musicians paraded behind them till they arrived at the Palace of Felicity (*dār al-saʿāda*).The circumcision took place there".[88]

To argue that use of sounds in efforts to shore up political images were not a unique Mamluk phenomenon would be supported by a quick review of historical texts from all quarters of the Abode of Islam. Sources in Arabic and Persian from all over the Islamicate world provide accounts of the employment of musical instruments to cheer up the soldiers,[89] to impress audiences and to broadcast might. Ibn Funduq, the historian of the city of Bayhaq in Iran, for example, tells of the role of drums and horns in alerting the Ghaznavid expedition force.[90] A quick glance at popular narrative sources will illuminate the prevalence of this practice of beating the drums to proclaim joyous events and disseminate information.[91] Such, for example, is found in a tale of the arrival of the ill king's boat from an island to the land. As it anchored, and the servants were making the preparations to receive him, "the drums played" (*wa-duqqat al-bashāʾir li-qudumih*[i]).[92] Another example is a story in the dateless "One Thousand and One Nights". The sound of drums filled the city's airas the wedding of the king Badr and Jawhara was proclaimed.[93] In another story we are told that a birth was publicised by maids who played with tambourines and other musical instruments.[94] In addition to these noisy sounds in the open-air that the armies of the sultanate produced, listeners could hear more mild voices in gathering. Such were the literary salons that took place at the sultans' courts. Poets read verses that highlighted the virtue of the ascending sultan.[95] Following the arrest of the king of Cyprus by al-Ashraf Barsbāy (in 1427) the poet

[80] Meloy, "Celebrating the Mahmal".
[81] On Ibn Jubayr's account see Jomier, *Le Mahmal*, 47; Warner, "Commerce and Spirituality", 211-214.
[82] Frenkel, "*Volksroman* under the Mamluks", 25.
[83] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 2: 233.
[84] Shoshan, *Popular Culture*, 42-44, 49-50; Lutfi, "Coptic Festivals".
[85] Cf. Frenkel, "Marriage and Family".
[86] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, 9:102 (732/April 1332).
[87] Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī, *Duwal al-islām*, 36; Frenkel, "Popular Culture", 198.
[88] Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Taʾrīkh*, 4:28-29; Ibn Ḥijjī, *Taʾrīkh*, 370.
[89] Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 1:429, 431 (Quṭuz in 658/1260).
[90] Ibn Funduq al-Bayhaqī, *Taʾrīkh Bayhaq*, 487.
[91] Al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, 126-127 (interpretating notes).
[92] Ibn ʿArab Shāh, *Fākihat al-khulafāʾ*, 29.
[93] Habicht, *Alf Layla wa-Layla*, 10:71.
[94] MacNaghten, *The Alf Laila*, 1:353.
[95] Al-ʿAynī, *al-ʿIqd al-Jumān*, 121.

Ibn al-Kharrāṭ read a *qaṣīda*. At the assembly of the leading political figures in Cairo he praised the victorious sultan.[96] The limited number of sound accounts presented above is supported by numerous short reports in contemporary Mamluk chronicles. The development of the public sphere by the governing elite was not restricted to stone and marble. The narrative accounts of the Mamluk soundscape fortify our argument that in order to capture their subjects' attention sultans and emirs shaped an urban space where mass events took place. Streets and squares were also decorated with textiles, colours, and lights. Music and sounds attracted the attention of passers-by and of large crowds.

Civil Milieu Sounds

Islam is a scriptural civilization. Qurʾān means reciting. A second tag of the scripture is *al-kitāb*, which means a written book, although the followers of the messenger who proclaimed the revelations believed that he was *al-nabī al-ummī* (the illiterate prophet). This did not belittle the social role of texts and flamboyant reading. On many occasions loud reciting of verses from the Qurʾān served as the axis of a religious ceremony. The following section is concerned with the acoustic mode of several texts, not in their semantic mode, i.e. not with social or liturgical history, but with the lyrical intensity of the reported performances. These reports serve as a clear indication that the governing military commanders and sultan were aware of the importance of creating an urban environment that would affect the visions and minds of their subjects. Since these accounts consist of the sheer bulk of the information that contemporary authors reported upon, readers of Mamluk chroniclers are familiar with this data;[97] hence I can limit the number of reference presented here. A first example to highlight this role of reading loudly in the public sphere during Islamic rituals is taken from a manual by Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn ʿUthmān (d. 615/1218), an Ayyubid historian of Cairo's cemetery. In his book he provides a list of prayers that should be recited at the shrine of Sayyida Nafīsa. The visitor is advised to start his vocal ritual by reciting two verses from the Qurʾān. The first verse is a plea to Allāh: "The mercy of God and His blessings be upon you, O people of the House!";[98] it is followed by a direct appeal to the dead: "O People of the House, God only desires to put away from you abomination and to cleanse you".[99] Then the visitor should proclaim:

> O God You encouraged me to execute deeds that I am familiar with, which I said, heard, obeyed, believed and made as a reward for Your Prophet, whom You commissioned to guide us towards You and to lead us towards You, as You said: "He is All-compassionate to the believers".[100] We adore Your guidance and we esteem the duties You imposed upon us and this obligation, the love of the family [of the Prophet Muḥammad], that You imposed upon us. O Allāh with my tongue I accomplish it, and I believe in itin my heart, with my feet I advance towards it, hoping to attain favour in this world and in the hereafter. Appealing to You that in the day when all family bonds and ties would be cut, You would help me. O God bless your Prophet.[101]

The vocal appeal attests to the strong belief that the loud voice would be heard in heaven. It is composed from selected Quranic verses and vows that name Allāh and Muḥammad. The visitor fortifies his belief by making them public sounds, his sounds also emphasize that Islam

[96] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Manhal*, 3:269-70, 7:213.
[97] Ibn Duqmāq, *Nuzhat al-anām*, 277.
[98] Q. 11, Hūd: 73.
[99] Q. 33, al-Aḥzab: 33.
[100] Q. 33, al-Aḥzab: 43.
[101] Ibn al-Faqīh ʿUthmān, *Murshid al-zuwwār*, 186-187; Ibn al-Zayyāt al-Anṣārī, *al-Kawākib al-sayyāra*, 34; This prayer refers to Q. 33:56: God and His angels bless the Prophet (*yuṣallūna ʿalā al-nabī*). O believers, do you also bless him (*ṣallū ʿalayhi*), and pray upon him peace.

is the governing religion in the vicinity where he utters his words. A different picture of vocal performance in the open public sphere is provided by Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī. The great historian reports in his topography of Cairo on a Sufi practices that hypnotized the city:

> People form Old Cairo (*miṣr*) would come on Fridays to the Fatimid quarter of the city to gain blessings and benefit from watching the Sufis of the central Sufi lodge (the Saʿīd al-Suʿāda khānqāh). Presenting an imposing appearance on Friday they used to go to al-Ḥākim mosque. The Chief Sufi sheikh of the lodge (*khānqāh*) would lead, while the novices (*khuddām*) marched ahead of him. The most senior amongst them carried the volumes (*rabʿa*) of the Noble Book on his head. They would walk in silence and restraint demureness to the door of the al-Ḥākim mosque [and stop] near the pulpit (*minbar*). They would enter, and the Shaykh then would make a prayer of greeting to the mosque from under a canopy (*saḥḥāba*) that he always had with him and the people would pray [in turn]. Then everyone would sit, and they would distribute the volumes of the Noble Qurʾān among them, reading from the Qurʾān until the *muʾadhdhin* would call for the afternoon prayer. Then they would collect the volumes and busy themselves with prayer and listening to the preaching (*khuṭba*), all of them listening humbly. When it was time for prayer and invocations, one of the readers of the *khānqāh* would get up and read something appropriate from the Qurʾān and then bless the Sultan Saladin, the endower of the *khānqāh*, and the rest of the Muslims. When he had finished, the Shaykh would get up from his prayers and then walk from the mosque to the *khānqāh*, the Sufis [walking] with him in the same way they had come to the mosque. This is one of the most beautiful customs of the people of Cairo.[102]

Supplications to Allāh and pleas to bless the prophet Muḥammad and his community can be traced from Islam's early days. During the Abbasid period Muslims started to circulate written and oral eulogies praising Muḥammad the Seal of the prophets. An early example of these writings is a booklet by Ibn Abī ʿĀsim, who among other traditions transmits the following prophetic maxim:

> We told the Messenger of Allāh: "we have learned how to say hello and goodbye"; but now we ask you how to pray for your own sake. Muḥammad said: "say O God extol Muḥammad and his family similarly to Your extolment of Abraham and his household. You are the praiseworthy and the glorious. O God bless Muḥammad and his family similarly to Your blessing of Abraham and his household. You are the praiseworthy and the glorious".[103]

This and similar texts were received with open arms by Mamluk audiences, who made use of some of these early booklets in praise of the Prophet.[104] Moreover, several Mamluk authors contributed directly to this literary genre. Readers' lists (*samāʿāt*) support this conclusion. An observable case demonstrating this is the library of the Damascene scholar Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.[105] We should assume that this ritual reading in praise of the Prophet was a loud sound ceremony and that the reciter raised his voice while uttering his supplications (*duʿāʾ*).[106] Several decades later Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ḥamawī (also known as al-Dimashqī) wrote a very detailed biography of the prophet Muḥammad (*sīra*).[107] Prayers for the Prophet occupy many pages in his composition.[108] Relying on earlier authors, Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn ties the commandment to pray for the cause of the Prophet Muḥammad to explicit sayings that are

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[102] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-mawāʿiẓ*, 4/2:729-730 (based on an informant who passed away in 800/13970 [Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism*, 94].
[103] Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, *Kitāb al-Salāt*, 12.
[104] Al-Maqdisī, *Thabat masmūʿāt*, 161.
[105] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Jalāʾ al-afhām*, 44 (33), 61, 73 (n. 71), 94 (no. 97 quoting Ismāʾīl b. Isḥāq al-Qāḍī, *Faḍl al-ṣalātʿalā al-nabī*, 41 (no. 31), 97 (no. 102), 105 (no. 116 quoting Ibn Abī ʿĀsim), 116 (no. 131 quoting Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim), 117 (no. 133 quoting Ismāʾīl b. Isḥāq al-Qāḍī), 496, 497, 504.
[106] Q. 17, al-Isrāʾ: 11 "Man prays for evil, as he prays for good" and 40: 60 "Your Lord has said, 'Call upon Me and I will answer you'". See Katz, *Prayer*, 29
[107] Al-Maqrīzī, *Imtāʿ al-asmāʿ*.
[108] Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ḥamawī, *Jāmiʿ al-āthār*, 8:101 ff.

attributed to him. Such, for example, is the maxim: "pray for me wherever you are because your prayer will reach me".[109] Muḥammad al-Jazūlī (d. c. 869/1465), a North African Muslim scholar and Sufi composed the very popular booklet *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt.* It is not clear if 15th-century Egyptians were familiar with this highly revered master. Al-Sakhāwī, a productive Mamluk author, says in his biographical dictionary:

> He stopped in Cairo in 840AH. In the pilgrimage of 841AH he visited Mecca. Afterwards he moved to al-Madīna and settled there. He returned to Mecca in 842AH and married. There he begat children, thought and wrote legal opinions. He died in Mecca in 863AH.[110]

Although this information conflicts with other accounts of the life and death of al-Jazūlī, we may accept al-Sakhāwī's note as supportive evidence of Egyptians' familiarity with the Maghribī Shaykh. There is no question that later Muslim generations were familiar with al-Jazūlī, whose book became a popular prayer manual.[111] As with the public narration of the Prophet's *sīra*, this manual was also performed loudly.[112] The history of the Prophet's birthday and death festival (*mawlid al-nabī* celebrated on the 12th of Rabīʿ I) has been studied thoroughly.[113] At the Mamluk Sultanate these celebrations were already a well-established custom. The veneration of the prophet Muḥammad was expressed during the Mamluk period in royal public celebrations. This public festival was performed yearly at the royal court in the mountain citadel.[114] The following account is not the only one that contemporary sources transmit:

> On Monday the 11th, as the custom is, the sultan [Qanıṣav] organized the novel birthday ceremony to commemorate the birth and death (*mawlid*) of the prophet Muḥammad. He instructed the pitching of the colossal tent that was produced by the sultan al-Ashraf Qāytbāy. It is said that it had cost 36 thousand golden dinars. This tent was constructed in the shape of a large hall divided into three wings and at its middle four tall pillars carrying a dome. Nothing on earth resembles it. It was produced from colourful textiles. No less than three hundred sailors are needed to erect this tent. The sultan ordered it be pitched in the inner garden of the citadel. Near it the servants of the drinks prepared from leather several troughs and filled them up with sweet water. Using racks, they hung precious clay pitchers and porcelain jars and bronze bowls. The place was much more decorated than usual. Accompanied by the army's chief of staff the sultan took his place in the tent. High ranking army commanders joined them. In line with custom the heads of the religious establishment and the upper social echelons followed suit. Then all the readers of the Qurʾān and the preacher ascended from the city of Cairo to the citadel on the hill. The sultan ordered the assembly be served with food and it was distributed lavishly. This was a special occasion and more exciting than any past *mawlid*.[115]

The commemoration was an arena that witnessed routine performances of ritual reciting of anecdotes concerning the Prophet's life. During this memorial event, storytellers narrated popular stories (about the Prophet's miraculous achievements). A guiding model of how contracts should be written illuminates the arrangements that were made to recite eulogies in praise of Muḥammad and his merits:

> The outlines of a document of a charity in favour of the noble *mawlid* are: X has donated etc. etc. the described property as a real, legal etc. endowment. He regulated that the supervisor of the

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[109] Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ḥamawī, *Jāmiʿal-āthār*, 8:105, 128.
[110] Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ*, 7:258-259 (no. 651)
[111] Padwick, *Muslim Devotions*, 146-147.
[112] Shinar, "Traditional and Reformist Mawlid Celebrations", 382-384; Shoshan, *Popular Culture*, 23-24.
[113] The Mamluk encyclopaedist al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā*, 3:502 (Fatimid *mawlid*); Schimmel, *And Muhammad is his Name*, 370-371.
[114] During the celebrations in Mecca the name of the ruling sultan was mentioned by Ibn Ẓahīra al-Qurayshī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-laṭīf*, 285.
[115] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 5:24-25 (11 Rabīʿ I 922/ 14 April 1516).

> charity and its administrator will start first with the construction of the property. … the surplice of the capital will be used to hire a learned scholar who will sit in the above-mentioned location and in front of him a stand (*kursī*). During the night of 12th Rabīʿ I, he will recite attractively to the gathering poems on the miraculous birth of the Prophet. It will be a clear reading accompanied with explanations, in high voice that the audience will be able to hear it, but with no music. In addition, the pious charity will pay to a chaste and trusted person who will be in charge of the candles. He will set the lamps and light the candles, arrange the meal and distribute it to those who gather to commemorate the *mawlid*… he also we pay to three bands, each band is composed of a leader and three men who accompany him. They will recite the complete reading from A to Z. They will pray for the founder of the charity and ask God to bless him and all the Muslims, women and men alike. They will continue to recite blessings till a reciter who will read poems in praise of Muḥammad will start reading.[116]

A second yearly celebration to commemorate Muḥammad's miraculous biography was the annual festival of his night-journey. Although the reciting of literary narratives of this mythical event was well-received, popular practices of the Miʿrāj ritual caused angry reactions within certain circles, as can be deduced from Ibn al-Ḥājj al-ʿAbdarī's "reports" on the "Night of Muḥammad's Ascension" (on the 27th Rajab).[117] In this chapter the critical jurist argues that:

> [From their wrong innovation] is their gathering in circles. Each circle has an elder whom they all imitate in the ritual of recollection, of repeating God's name and recitation of verses (*dhikr*)[118] from the Book (i.e. Qurʾān). If only that implied ritual remembrance prayer and recitation from the Qurʾān! Instead they play with God's religion. For instance, for the most part the chanter (*dhākir*) who leads the remembrance prayer does not say the Qurʾānic statement "There is no god but God (*lā ilāha illa'llāh*) [which indicates that God is One and Unique (*kalīmat al-tawḥīd*)]", rather he says "Don't follow him, let's go!". They shorten the letter A and employ it as a link without a vowel sound. When they say "Glory be to God"(*subḥāna'llāh*), they quicken the pace of it so much and repeat it until you can hardly understand. The reciter performs verses from the Qurʾān, adding to it what is not in it, subtracting from it what is in it, in accordance with intonations and reverberations which resemble singing (*al-ghināʾ*)and scales which they adopted, the reprehensible conditions (*dhamīma*) of which you already know.

Then there is a great matter, al-ʿAbdarī adds. The reciter begins with the recitation of the Qurʾān, and another reciter delivers lines of poetry, or wishes to do so, so they silence the Qurʾān reciter, or strive with him, or leave this one and his poem and that one and his reciting on account of their noticing others listening to a mystical trance music (*samāʿ*) of poetry and those forged intonations. These types of games with religion, were they to be held outside the mosque, would be prohibited. How then is it allowed when it is inside the mosque, moreover, on this noble night? "We surely belong to Allāh and to Him we shall return" (Q. 2: 156).[119] Within walls of lodges and other constrictions as well as in open spaces, Sufis gathered and practiced their meditative rite of recollection (*dhikr*).[120] Ibn ʿAṭā Allāh explains what a *dhikr* is:

> remembrance of Allāh is liberation from ignorance… It has been said that it is the repetition (*tardīd*) on the Name of the Invoked (God) by the heart and by the tongue… Remembrance may be with the tongue, the heart, or members of the body. It may be practiced secretly or openly…Invoking with the tongue is the remembrance of the letters [of God's name] without

[116] Al-Asyūṭī, *Jawāhir al-ʿuqūd*, 1:368 [Katz, in Brockopp, *The Cambridge Companion to Muhammad*, 145.
[117] Colby, "The Rhetoric of Innovative Tradition", 39-40; Webb, "The Familiar and the Fantastic".
[118] Homerin, "Recalling You, My Lord".
[119] Al-ʿAbdarī, *al-Madkhal*, 1:297 [The English translation is based upon Colby, "The Rhetoric of Innovative Tradition", 40].
[120] Tafur, *Travels and Adventures*, 71 describes the unruly friends of Allāh. On them see Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*.

> being in the [state of] presence (*ḥuḍūr*) [with God].[121] It is the outward remembrance, but it has great virtue as witnessed by the [employment] of verses from the Quran, stories on the history of the Prophet and his sayings.[122]

Another example by Ibn ʿAṭā Allāh is the following story:

> One of our comrades used to say frequently Allāh, Allāh. One day a tree trunk fell on his head and fractured his skull. The blood spilled on the ground spelling Allāh, Allāh.[123]

In a third piece, Ibn ʿAṭā Allāh dwells upon the issue of dancing and chanting during *dhikr* ecstatic occasions:

> You would experience in your mind the sound of cymbals and horns. Invoking is powerful. When the sound descends into a place, it does so with its horns and cymbals. The invocation is against everything except God (*al-ḥaqq*). When it settles in some place it actively seeks to expel its opposite, as we find in the combination of water and fire.[124]

This *dhikr* ritual, the constant evoking of the name of God,[125] sometimes led to modes of behaviour that were not approved by critical observers who voiced their condemnations. Describing the great Sufi Shaykh Abū al-Wafāʾ, the historian Ibn Ḥajar provides an ego document:

> I met him in a Sufi gathering (*daʿwa*) and I rejected his companions gesturing in prostration towards him. He continued with the chanting [to reinforce ecstasy and induce mystical trance] (*samāʿ*) and during the whirling dance he recited the verse: "Wherever you turn, there is the Face of God" (Q. 2:115). Law students that were presented cried out: "You have blasphemed! You have blasphemed!"So he stopped the session and accompanied by his followers left [the mosque]. [126]

No wonder that some circles in the Mamluk elite were not happy with these popular events and made efforts to censor them. Their critical evaluation of the commoners cast light on prevalent practises.[127] This is not the place to dwell upon questions regarding "the Mediterranean Islamic city" and its features.[128] Circumventing the architectural or structural dimensions of this colonial model, I will dwell in this study on its social and legal features,[129] advancing the thesis that these urban conglomerates were governed by regulations and decrees that were interpreted as derived from the sacred Islamic Law (*sharīʿa*).[130] The prevalence of the Islamic courts and judges, the role of the *muḥtasib*, the predominance of the sounds of Islamic religious rituals and the marginality of non-Muslims (through restrictions imposed on them) were all component in the routine life of human spaces that clearly define an "Islamic city".[131] To these criteria we should add the principle role of Islamic pious foundations (*waqf* pl. *awqāf*) in establishing urban institutions and in the daily life of these towns. The influence of religious endowments on the landscape of the Mamluk city was immense.[132] The *awqāf* paid for the construction of a very wide range of social and religious

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[121] Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 105
[122] Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Miftāḥ al-falāḥ*, 3 [Koury-Danner (trans.), *The Remembrance of God in Sufism*, 45-46].
[123] Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Miftāḥ al-falāḥ*, 4 [Koury-Danner (trans.), *The Remembrance of God in Sufism*,, 48].
[124] Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Miftāḥ al-falāḥ*, 4-5 [Koury-Danner (trans.), *The Remembrance of God in Sufism*,, 48].
[125] For an inner Sufi definition of this ritual see Najm al-Dīn Kubrā ed. Mole [trans. Zargar, 128].
[126] Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 2:308 [no. 16]; McGregor, *Sanctity*, 55.
[127] Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 3: 402-03 (831/April 1428, an ego document).
[128] Neglia, "Some Historiographical Notes".
[129] Gottreich, "Rethinking the 'Islamic City'".
[130] Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 119-125.
[131] Frenkel, "Is There an Islamic Space?".
[132] Raymond, "Les Grands Waqfs": 114-116; Luz, *The Mamluk City*, 107-147.

institutions. They also met the maintenance costs of these edifices and also paid regular salaries to their staff. From *waqf* certificates and other legal documentation we learn that muezzins and reciters were paid by pious charities to call to prayer or to recite verses from the Qurʾān.

Sounds from minarets made Islam heard as well as seen. They produced a space where five time a day calls to the believers to congregate in the mosques (*adhān*)[133] are heard loudly and clearly. Passers-by would also hear loud readings from the Qurʾān and from Ḥadīth collections (in Mamluk Cairo particularly from *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*).[134] Yet limiting myself to the study of urban acoustic spaces I dwelled in this chapter only concisely upon sonic enclaves that housed religious rituals, such as Sufi mystical invocations (*dhikr*) or students' auditions (*samāʿ*). Indeed, a vast range of contemporaneous sources support the indicators presented above and allow the use of the term "Islamic city" regarding the Mamluk towns in Egypt and Syria. In their streets sounded not only royal and military voices, analysed previously, but also communal and religious voices, namely sounds that constitute an integral component of Islamic rituals.[135] *Awqāf* documents, some already mentioned previously, refer to several functionaries whose duties included raising their voices loudly so that the endowers' fame would reach the ears of the population. The endowment certificate of the *madrasa* that the sultan Abū al-Maḥāsin al-Nāṣir Ḥasan (1356-1361) built in al-Rumayla (near the Citadel of Cairo in 760/1359) provides an example of such a case.[136] He appointed a team of sixteen muezzins and four shifts' heads who would recite the call to prayer, "those leading the rituals of Islam", and readers of the Qurʾān "who will recite continually and repeatedly the Book of God,[137] and will not stop from doing it day and night". He also appointed, in addition to Ḥadīth teacher, a reader to recite traditions from the Ḥadīth collection and an additional performer (*mādiḥ*) who would recite poems eulogizing (*madāʾīḥ*) the Prophet.[138] Accomplishing this task, they will pray, and on behalf of the donor will ask God's beneficiation. In the mausoleum (*qubba*) the donor/sultan appointed sixty men whose task was to recite from the Qurʾān continually, day and night. Thirty would read in the night and thirty during the day. Each shift was prolonged two hours and the readers' team was composed of five men. At the end of each session one of the team would address God on behalf the sultan.[139]

A similar formula is mentioned in the *waqf* document that the sultan Qāyitbāy endowed to maintain the shrine complex of Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī. He stipulated the addition of three Qurʾān reciters. One was to recite every day after the evening prayer by the window of the dome where the saint was buried.[140] Letters sent by pilgrims from the Hajj road were among the texts that were performed publicly. Damascene chronicles regularly inform their readers about letters sent by pilgrims either on the way to Mecca or when they were back from Arabia.[141] Moreover, supplications by passers-by who walked through the towns' alleys or stopped at the mausolea (*turba*s)' windows echoed the voice of Islam. These sounds

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[133] Describing a political crisis at the court of the sultan Ḥasan (759/August 1358) that involved soldiers and Sufis, the historian tells: "before the call to the evening prayer the situation calmed down and the disturbances stopped". Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, 10:309.

[134] On that, see further below.

[135] Al-Dhahabī, *al-ʿIbar*, 4:13 (A band of Sufis was received with open arms "*wa-kānat tudaqq*^{u} *lahū nawb*^{an}").

[136] Al-Harithy, "The Four Madrasahs".

[137] The Ottoman scholar Birgvi (Birkawī) opposed the payment to Quran readers, a practice which he considered no less then hypocrisy.

[138] Compare with the position of a reciter who will read the "Poem of the Mantle" at the Dome of the Rock on Friday and on Monday. Rabāyiʿa, *Sijillāt, sijill* 149 p. 72 (no. 157).

[139] Al-Harithy, *The Waqf Document*, 4, 149-150 153, 155-158; and her studies "The Complex of Sultan Ḥasan"; "The Four Madrasahs".

[140] Hallenberg, "The Sultan Who Loved Sufis", 153.

[141] Ibn Ḥijjī, *Taʾrīkh*, 37, 380.

certainly accentuated the authority of Islam. Starting with the Ayyubid Sultanate it became traditional for the founder of a religious institution to add his own intended mausoleum (*turba*) to a religious building he had founded.[142] Often, mausoleums were much more richly decorated than the buildings they were attached to. Ideally the façade of the chamber where the sarcophagus of the founder stood opened onto the street. It was given a large rectangular window with an iron grill.[143] It housed a Shaykh who recited the Qurʾān for the blessings of the soul of the dead. Sitting in the dark tomb chamber, next to the sarcophagus that was illuminated by candles, his voice was intended to attract the attention of passers-by. The vocal sound linked the tomb with the urban public space. Several court records cast light on reciters of the Qurʾān who were employed by urban mausolea and of payments to these men, whose voices were heard by passers-by. A nomination degree (*marsūm*) from Jerusalem provides an example of this. The supervisor (*nāẓir*) of the shrine of Ṭāz, a late army officer, ordered that Ṣārim al-Dīn Ibrāhīm replace the late Yūnis.[144] He was to sit near the tomb and recite from the Qurʾān groups of verses (*ʿashr*).[145]

Documents and inscriptions from other shrines throughout the Mamluk Sultanate carry similar stipulations.[146] The tomb chamber at the Jalāqiyya, in the Chain Street, contains two cenotaph grilled windows opening on the street.[147] As in the case with the Ṭāziyya, it housed a reciter. A court record from Jerusalem deals with pious endowments that payed reciters who set next to a tomb and read from the Qurʾān.[148] The audio-visual elements of design contributed to the development of an Islamic urban space. The vow of silence that Muslims made strengthens the claim that sounds do matter.[149] Taking an oath not to speak can be traced in early traditions.[150] Jesus, who became a moral example for many Muslims, is associated with sayings in favour of silence.[151] Al-Suyūṭī transmits a maxim: "to refrain from talking continually, day and night, is forbidden".[152] His selection of this tradition indicates that practicing a vow of silence was not strange to his society. Moreover, some Sufi circles inspired their followers to practice silence.[153]

Monitoring the Voices

That control of sounds was significant we can construe by looking from an opposite angle: namely, from reports on the banning of the production of voices and of noises. While Muslims made loud vocal and instrumental sounds, non-Muslims were ordered to lower their voices. In the domains of the Mamluk Sultanate standard regulations designed the limits of the sounds that these communities were permitted to produce. Intending to prop up the hegemony of Islam, the governors envisioned the control of the sounds that their non-Muslim subjects were producing, and even to suppress them.

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[142] Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture of the Mamluk City*, 198; Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture in Cairo*, 15; al-Harithy, "The Concept of Space".
[143] Muhammad Beg b. Zakariyā, Zāwiya (c. 748/1348) Jerusalem Ḥaram doc. ## 643 = Burgoyne, *Mamluk Jerusalem*, 72.
[144] Diem, "Philologisches", 11 (doc. 214).
[145] Al-Dānī, *Kitāb al-naqṭ*, 133; idem, *al-Muḥkam*, 14-15; Sell, *The Faith of Islam*, 347 (app. A: *ʿIlm al-tajwīd*); Rippin, *The Blackwell Companion to the Quran*, 178.
[146] Gaube, *Arabische Inschriften*, 91 (no. 174).
[147] Burgoyne, *Mamluk Jerusalem*, 191.
[148] Rabāyiʿa, *Sijillāt*, 84 (no. 178/2 1064/1654).
[149] Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Kitāb al-Ṣamt*.
[150] Calder, "*Ḥinth, birr, tabarrur, taḥannuth*, 214-215.
[151] Khalidi in Samir (ed.), *Christian Arab Apologetic* // idem. *The Muslim Jesus*, 59 no. 13.
[152] Al-Suyutī, *al-Amr bil-ittibāʿ*, 231.
[153] Waugh, *Visionaries of Silence*.

The history of the Pact (ʿ*ahd*) of ʿUmar is far beyond the limits of the present study, hence it is sufficient to call your attention to several adaptations of this pseudo-certificate that circulated in the Sultanate's domains. A version of an early compilation that was copied in Mamluk Cairo (in 1455) casts lights on this aspect of Muslim-Christian relations.[154] An item in this fictive pact contains an undertaking by the Christians: "We shall beat on small balls (*nawāqis*) gently and reading [the Bible] we shall not rise our voices".[155] The rules imposed on non-Muslims are in line with this interpretation. Again, a text compiled by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya[156] indicates the desirable direction. In his book on regulations concerning Jews and Christians he limits Christians' public celebrations and bans them from openly displaying crosses. Analysing the Pact of ʿUmar the famous Damascene jurist quotes what he presents as a letter that the Christians of Syria wrote to the caliph ʿUmar:

> We shall use the *nāqūs* (wooden clappers or gong clappers)[157] only within our churches and play them only very softly. We shall not display our crosses or our books in the roads or markets of the Muslims. We shall not raise our voices during praying, recitation or when calling to following our dead.[158]

Restrictions that religious scholars issued regarding funerals and lamentations provide a different sort of evidence of efforts paid by Mamluk rulers to govern the sounds voiced in the public sphere. For example, they criticize the sounds produced during funerals. The employing of professional mourners, these scholars argued, contradicts the Islamic norms. The raising of the voices of these women disturbs the ideal of bearing patiently with God's verdict and, the scholars argued, contradicts the Islamic norms. The voices of these women disturb the ideal of bearing patiently with God's verdict.[159] The regulations of the markets' inspector (*muḥtasib*) provide several examples to support my interpretations concerning the social function of sounds and the authorities' efforts to monitor voices. According to Mamluk period manuals, the *muḥtasib* should inspect the towns' graveyard, and he should also prevent women from ostentatious lamentation, visiting graves, and following the bier.[160] Measures to control sounds were not limited to voices produced by the Protected People. Procedures to restrict voices created by women and rival Muslim communities serve as a clear indication of the politics of the ruling military aristocracy and its continuous efforts to control the public space. Sultan's steps often brought them closer to the religious establishment. This policy upholds the deduction regarding the Mamluk soundscape and its political dimensions presented above.

Yet it is clear that the military aristocracy did not follow blindly those religious scholars who expressed hostility to popular sounds. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's attack (in 740/1339-40) on Sufi groups that assembled (*samāʿ*) to chant, play music, beat drums, blow horns and dance[161] did not lead to the governors' cracking down on the popular Sufi group. Their visibility in sources shows that the voices they made were perceived as an approved component in the Mamluk soundscape. This is in opposition to music that singers played. Again and again we come across reports on taxation imposed upon places that housed musicians and the abolition of this tax. This step was received as a sign of the sultan's

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[154] Cohen, "What was the Pact of Umar?", 137.
[155] Tritton, *The Caliphs*, 5.
[156] On him see Hoover "Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya", Masthurhah, "The Views of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah".
[157] For a description, see Shams al-Dīn al-Zurqānī, *Sharḥ al-Zurqānī ʿalā al-Muwaṭṭaʾ* 1:121.
[158] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Aḥkām*, 3:1159.
[159] El Cheikh, *Women, Islam, and Abbasid Identity*, 44-58.
[160] Ibn al-Ukhūwwa, *Kitāb Maʿālim al-qurba*, 106 (Arabic) [trans. Levy, 18 (English)]; Ohtoshi, "Cairene Cemeteries", 110.
[161] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Kalām ʿalā masalat al-samāʿ*.

religious commitment.[162] The control of voices in urban environments emphasises the characterisation of the Mamluk city as an Islamic town. That is, as a place where social values were articulated as Islamic public regulations. In constructed zones sounds served as the major tool in transmitting messages that were blocked by walls and other obstacles. Behind the screens women could perceive (*min warāʾ al-sitār*) the military bands. The beating of the drums penetrated the raised barriers. Cities' dwellers would hear during the dark nights the voices of the muezzins. Passers-by could catch the voice of readers reciting verses from the Qurʾān.

Conclusion

In line with the social and cultural characteristics of Mamluk society, orality and written documents were complementary modes of communication and not opposite poles. Walls and constructions could not stop sounds from penetrating the ears and minds of the subjects, notifying them that they were controlled by an authoritative force. The need to achieve this goal designated at the same time the performances of the rulers who invested considerable sums in creating an imposing urban space. The soundscape echoed the multilingual nature of Mamluk court culture. Devotional invocations were read loudly in what might be called intersection diglossia.[163] Turkish was used regularly in Mamluk society. The accounts and stories that are at the heart of this research contribute to the study of everyday life and politics in the late Middle Islamic Period. They support the thesis that sounds served more than a simple identity tag; sounds were a social communication tool, employed by believers who held that their voices were heard by God. The melody transmitted the message. Uttering or listening to sounds created among the audiences a sense of a joined action, it inspired them and motivated them. The participants could share the feeling that their voices might generate heavenly reaction. Sound are strongly related to power and authority,[164] and hence to establishment ambitions to control the soundscape. They mediate between the rulers and the subjects and shape the public's mind. [165]They are an efficient tool to install in the minds and hearts of subjects the image that the ruling elite aspire to. The sounds of the sultanate echoed the political structure of this regime – a military aristocracy that claimed to govern Egypt and Syria on behalf of Islam and presented as its *raison d'être* the protection of the Muslims. We can uphold the thesis of a unique Islamic soundscape. The subjects of the sultanate and its governing elite were exposed to sounds that echoed the self-image of the leading military aristocracy. By its self-definition the sultanate was an Islamic state. This is clearly reflected in contemporary jurists' writings, biographies and chronicles. The ceremonies at the streets of the cities fortified this stance. The year centred around pilgrimage festivals, the departure and return of the Hajj caravan, were flamboyant ceremonial occasions. The calls to the mosques (*adhān*) and the daily reciting from the Qurʾān, funerals, popular festivals and other events had a phonetic dimension that can be identified as a unique Islamic one. The drums and trumpets declared that a powerful army was steering the governing wheels. These reverberating voices rumbled in the streets. They served as symbols of sultanic authority, of royal (*al-malik*) power. They projected control of the space, disseminating the sultan's image as protector of Islam and of Arabia's holy cities, the governing elite of the sultanate thereby manipulated pre-mamluk tradition. Although we should point out that voices can be employed

[162] Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Taʾrīkh*, 2: 506-07.
[163] Al-Khāzindārī, *Taʾrīkh majmūʿ al-nawādir*, 159.
[164] Al-Ṣafadī, *Āthār al-uwal*, 247-250.
[165] Certainly, this was not the only tool sultans used to cultivate an authoritative image. See the *One Thousand Nights* story about Qāyitbāy walking around the streets of Cairo dressed as a North-African pilgrim. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr*, 3:121 (881/December 1476).

as a subversive tool, which can erode governing power, express resentment, protest, and challenge the rulership. The above examples clearly illustrate the potential contribution of soundscape history to the study of Mamluk history, architecture and archeology. Students of historical anthropology would agree with the methodical presumption that soundscape history casts light not only on old practices and custom, but also on the invention of tradition in medieval circumstances.[166]

[166] Hobsbawm/Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*.

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